

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
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INFO USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
USNAAA/USCINCEUR
USNMR SHAPE
USDOCOSOUTH
CINCUSAFE
CINCUSNAVEUR
CINCUSAREUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: UK, NATO, OCON, MILI, AWACS
SUBJECT: NATO AEW -- MULLEY'S MARCH 22 STATEMENT IN
COMMONS

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REF: MACDONALD-TIMBERLAKE 22 MARCH TELCON

1. DURING COURSE OF GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENT ON A "TAKE
NOTE" MOTION ON THE 1977 DEFENSE ESTIMATES, SECRETARY
MULLEY SAID THE FOLLOWING ON NATO AEW: QUOTE ANOTHER
MAJOR QUESTION ON WHICH THE ALLIANCE HAS NOT YET BEEN
ABLE TO REACH A COLLECTIVE DECISION IS IN AEW. THE

PROVISION OF NEW AIRBORNE EARLY WARNING AIRCRAFT IS A PROGRAM TO WHICH BRITAIN ATTACHES VERY HIGH PRIORITY. AS THE HOUSE KNOWS VERY WELL FROM THE LARGE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS I HAVE DEALT WITH BOTH TODAY AND ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, AND FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE THAT MEMBERS HAVE HAD WITH ME AND MY MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES, THERE ARE TWO WAYS IN WHICH THIS REQUIREMENT COULD AT PRESENT BE MET. THE GOVERNMENT'S PREFERENCE HAS BEEN FOR A TRULY COLLECTIVE NATO SOLUTION TO WHAT IS A NATO-WIDE PROBLEM OF AIR DEFENSE, BASED ON THE BOEING E-3A AIRCRAFT. AGREEING TO PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT WAS NOT AN EASY DECISION IN THE FIRST PLACE BECAUSE A BRITISH PROJECT WAS AVAILABLE TO SATISFY OUR NATIONAL REQUIREMENT FOR AEW AND, BY SO DOING, TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE ALLIANCE'S DEFENSE CAPABILITY. BUT WE TOOK THE DECISION IN THE FIRST PLACE IN MAY 1975 AND HAVE STUCK TO IT SINCE IN THE WIDER INTERESTS OF THE ALLIANCE -- WHICH ARE AFTER ALL OUR WIDER INTERESTS AS WELL.

LATER THIS WEEK THERE IS TO BE A FURTHER MEETING OF NATO DEFENSE MINISTERS, THE THIRD IN A SERIES AT WHICH AEW HAS BEEN FULLY DISCUSSED BEGINNING WITH THE MEETING OF LAST JUNE AND CONTINUING WITH THAT IN DECEMBER. AT EACH OF THE TWO EARLIER MEETINGS IT HAD BEEN OUR HOPE THAT A POSITION COULD BE REACHED ON THE STRENGTH OF WHICH WE COULD TAKE A CLEAR-CUT DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PROCEED WITH NIMROD. THIS DID NOT PROVE POSSIBLE BUT THE GOVERNMENT WAS PREPARED TO ACCEPT TWO POSTPONEMENTS GIVEN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE TO NATO AND THEREFORE TO OUR OWN SECURITY. AT UNCLASSIFIED

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THE DECEMBER MEETING, HOWEVER, I MADE IT CLEAR TO OUR ALLIES THAT I DID NOT THINK WE COULD AFFORD FURTHER DELAY BEYOND THE EARLY PART OF THIS YEAR. THAT REMAINS MY POSITION. IF IT PROVES IMPOSSIBLE, EVEN WITH THE EXTRA TIME WE HAVE AGREED TO MAKE AVAILABLE TO ARRIVE AT A FIRM AND FULLY-WORKED-OUT DECISION IN FAVOR OF THE NATO COLLECTIVE FORCE, THEN I DO NOT AT THIS STAGE SEE ANY ALTERNATIVE TO OUR RECONSIDERING OUR POSITION.

I CANNOT, OF COURSE, ANTICIPATE THE OUTCOME OF FRIDAY'S MEETING. HOWEVER, IF IT SHOULD HAPPEN THAT WE GO AHEAD WITH NIMROD IT WOULD BE ON THE BASIS THAT IT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO NATO'S REQUIRED AEW CAPABILITY AND COULD BE MADE COMPATIBLE WITH WHATEVER ADDITIONAL AEW CAPABILITIES OUR ALLIES DECIDED TO PROCURE. END QUOTE.

2. COMMENT WILL BE PROVIDED SEPTTEL.

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